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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the use of cohort structures in administrator-preparation programs. The paper considers how cohorts operate effectively as communities and how the cohort promotes the enhancement of the individual. Data were derived from an analysis of the journals of 51 students enrolled in cohort programs at four university sites in California, Colorado, Texas, and Wyoming. Interaction is explored in relation to its effects on collegiality; purpose is viewed as the basis of collaboration. Group interaction and collaboration are shown to be necessary to both individual and group development. Individual growth is explored in relation to transformational leadership, and group growth is discussed as a necessary condition for organizational transformation. Respondents said that the cohort program gave them mutual support and solidarity, which led to increased interdependence. They also reported significant personal growth and enhanced knowledge. The paper presents a cohort model of individual and group development. The group is built on three interacting cornerstones--interaction, purpose, and interdependence. As the group is strengthened, so is the individual. The more empowered the individual member becomes, the more significantly he/she contributes to group development. Cohort programs have great potential for fostering a new leadership paradigm. Four tables and one figure are included. (Contains 39 references.) (LMI)

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Cultivating a New Leadership Paradigm: From Cohorts to Communities

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Cultivating a New Leadership Paradigm:
From Cohorts to Communities

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs
to you.

Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass

Introduction

Individuals are intricately interwoven into groups and groups become reflections of individuals. Individuals are supported, affirmed, and inspired in groups- they are transformed. In turn, individuals transform groups through their collective efforts and commitment to a meaningful purpose. Groups empower individuals; individuals empower groups. It is a reciprocal process known as community.

A new climate pervades today's schools--one characterized by communities of learners and leaders. School leaders, emersed in this culture, must be facilitators who can orchestrate individual and organizational transformations.

The challenge for community does not rest with the schools alone. Educational administration programs must foster this new leadership paradigm. Not only must they model community, they must view students as communities of learners and leaders. They must insure that these future school leaders are provided the skills necessary to create collaborative school environments. Leadership preparation must be process, as well as content driven, with universities becoming laboratories in which collaborative leadership can be examined and refined. One such laboratory may already exist.

The cohort structure, a present and fashionable mode of course delivery, has potential for serving as that learning laboratory. Besides the obvious collegial benefits of cohorts, they may well have unclaimed potential for developing the leadership for building school communities.

Background Information

Groups can be considered from a sociological as well as a psychological perspective. Sociologically, group perspective centers on the forces that impact group development, as well as how groups exert influence. From this perspective, the individual is seen as part of a larger system; the individual's behavior affects the larger system and events that follow. The psychological view of groups is concerned with the individual member within the group. How are the individual's thoughts, actions and behaviors influenced by group norms? What effect does the group have on the development of the individual?

In this paper, we consider both group perspectives- not only how cohorts operate effectively as communities, but how the cohort promotes the enhancement of the individual. From the literature, we present a theoretical/philosophical foundation for both perspectives. Connecting links are drawn between these four identified cohort cornerstones and a transformational leadership paradigm. **Interaction** is explored in relation to its effects on collegiality; **purpose** is viewed as the basis of collaboration. Group interaction and collaboration are shown to be necessary to both **individual development**, as well as **group development**. Individual growth is explored in relation to transformational leadership. Group growth is discussed as a necessary condition for the transformation of organizations.

This paper is presented in five sections: Group Development; Individual Development; Preparation and Transfer; The Study; and Conclusions.

I. Group Development

Groups have been defined to mean "two or more interdependent individuals who influence each other through social interaction (Forsyth, 1990). Groups, characterized by communication and interaction, result in a dynamic interrelationship that fosters their interdependence (Hare, 1976; McGrath, 1984; Cartwright and Zander, 1968). Interdependence, therefore, is considered the hallmark of a true group; it is the quality that makes a group "real".

Realness should not be confused with "entitativity", the extent to which groups seem to be a unified entity (Campbell, 1989). Judgments concerning a group's entitavity are based on three qualities: 1) Do the members share a common fate; 2) Is there similarity among groups members- is their behavior consistent? 3) Is there proximity among the individuals? These qualities alone do not make a group real; they merely represent a collection of individuals.

The concept of entitativity is important in considering cohorts and their relationship to the building of future educational communities. A cohort, conveniently arranged as a structural component to "reformed" educational administration programs may, or may not, be a fully functioning group; therefore, its connection to the building of community may be questionable.

How then do we determine if cohorts are indeed real groups, and how do we foster a more deliberate attempt to make them so? A review of group dynamics literature provides some clues. True groups are characterized by some important qualities that have implication for the design of cohorts (Basom, Yerkes, Norris and Barnett, 1994):

1. There is a dynamic interaction among the individual members. This interaction is influenced by the size of the group and by the frequency of the individuals' interaction. Face-to-face, frequent interaction promotes a positive interdependence that requires the involvement of all group members in accomplishing their task. The smaller the group, the greater the need for each member to contribute to the group's goals. These intensive interactions result in individual accountability (Johnson and Johnson, 1987). Interaction should be among group members rather than being directed toward the leader. To the extent that a leader (i.e. facilitator) is the focal point of the group's attention, the group's interaction and therefore interdependence are lessened (Loeser, 1990)

2. There is interdependence that fosters both individual and group development. Interdependence is related to the degree of interaction (i.e. cohesiveness) and purposeful commitment displayed. As individuals within groups interact and become collaborative, groups develop into interdependent entities where individuals support each other, pool

their resources, combine their efforts, and develop friendship bonds, rules and rituals (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). Cohesive groups exude a mutual respect for one another - a recognition of individual differences and an appreciation of individual strengths. An emotional safety net results from this exchange, allowing individuals to reveal themselves to one another, to receive feedback from group members, and to become more self aware. In the process, individuals develop new skills and clarify their beliefs and ideas.

As groups develop and mature, certain behavioral patterns and routines are established that guide members' actions. These patterns, referred to as norms, are the common beliefs members have about what constitutes appropriate behavior. In most cases, norms influence the expectations people have for their participation and help to maintain behavioral consistency (Johnson and Johnson, 1987). Being able to anticipate how others will act reduces ambiguity and fosters mutual trust among group members.

As a group continues to develop, it takes on a certain character or identity. When members become intensely committed to the group's goals, genuinely like one another, and have a sense of shared unity or solidarity, the group is seen as cohesive (Johnson and Johnson, 1987; Ridgeway, 1983). Cohesiveness is evidenced by group members' attendance, arrival time, and ongoing participation (Johnson and Johnson, 1987); by the quantity and quality of their communication (Shaw, 1981); and by their satisfaction and goal attainment (Ridgeway, 1983). Furthermore, as trust and positive norms develop, members of a cohesive group have a greater sense of security which may allow them to express their frustrations and hostilities more readily than if they were involved in a group where such cohesiveness was not present (Johnson and Johnson, 1987).

From their study of successful work groups, Larson and LaFasto (1989) provide a core of common elements important for the implementation of groups, and therefore, cohorts: There must be:

.A clear and elevating goal that provides direction to the group.

.A unified commitment among group members resulting from the personal energy and effort expended.

.A results-driven structure allowing teams to create clear roles, establish effective communication, monitor their performance, and make fact-based judgments.

.A collaborative climate providing an atmosphere of trust where members remain problem-focused and compensate for one another.

.Standards of excellence resulting from the personal desire to succeed and from external pressure.

.Knowledge that their contributions are valued. There must be external support and recognition which is critical for members to feel important

.Principled leadership which establishes vision, creates change and utilizes the talents of all group members.

Facilitator. These successful groups need to be led by a skilled facilitator. This person need not be the formal group leader; however, he/she must have the respect of other members, as well as, the talent to assist the group in processing its progress. While Larson and LaFasto (1989) define successful work groups as those which accomplish their assigned tasks, these groups will not function effectively if there is not time devoted to processing their interactions. Processing allows individuals to acknowledge their own personal level of efficacy and helps team members to identify the positive factors that are contributing to the group's work (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). Another advantage of group processing is that it provides all group members with opportunities to practice and refine their collaborative skills.

When processing group interaction, certain guidelines and facilitation strategies can be helpful to the facilitator and group members. First, time needs to be regularly set aside for group members to reflect on group interactions. This planned reflection may occur before, during, or at the conclusion of a work session. Regardless of when group processing occurs, it must not be overlooked because of time constraints.

Second, a variety of group processing strategies may be incorporated into the group's routines. For example, an observer can provide feedback throughout the session, group members can acknowledge others who are modeling appropriate collaborative

skills, and group members can identify what they are doing well or could do better to advance the work of the group. Once these group processing strategies become a fixture in the way the group operates, they become an established norm.

Norms. Norms should be flexible enough that if they are constraining the group leader to monitor norms, the group members themselves must help one another to enforce these norms. Allowing participants to identify and adjust the norms builds ownership in how the group operates and what it is attempting to accomplish.

Certainly, concepts that foster the interdependence of groups are necessary considerations in using the cohort as an effective learning laboratory for building community. Equally important, however, is the individual and the impact of a cohort curriculum on the development of leadership artistry.

II. Individual Development

To appreciate the value of any curriculum for adults, consideration must be given to the nature of adult development and learning. What do we know of adult development and life stages that can lend understanding as we consider the compatibility of the cohort as a curriculum delivery system? Theorists Erik Erikson and Daniel Levison provide insight.

Erikson (1968) divides human development into eight stages: the Young Adulthood Stage (ages 20-40) has particular relevance for this paper since it is characterized by a conflict between intimacy and isolation. Erikson believes that successful resolution of this conflict results in the adult's ability to love, or to care for, others. Educational environments need to foster a climate of trust so that young adults feel free to reveal themselves to others. These environments should be climates where individuals "can safely confide in one another, take chances, and succeed or fail without losing a sense of self-worth" (Levine, 1989, p. 58). The Humanistic view of curriculum, which seeks to integrate cognitive and affective development, supports this need for social and emotional security in the learning setting (McNeil, 1985). In his classic work, Freedom to Learn, the Humanist, Rogers (1969), expresses the need for educational environments that promote self discovery and exploration-environments that promote a

deep respect for human life. Respect sets the tone for a trusting relationship and supports the young adult's resolution of the intimacy/isolation conflict. Additional understanding of the adult's developmental needs is provided by Levinson.

Levinson (1986) divides adult growth and development into three eras punctuated by transition phases of building and changing, and stability and transition. The era of Early Adulthood (ages 17-45) is of particular concern. This era, characterized by exploration and a sense of discovery, is a time of optimism and idealism. New ideas and skills are developed, and the adult can easily be both learner and leader (Levine, 1989). Throughout this period, it is important that opportunities be afforded the learner to explore many alternatives and to question existing paradigms. Divergence, rather than convergence, should be emphasized. During this time of exploration, the learner should not be asked to conform to a "model of knowing rather than discovering " (Levine, 1989, p. 72). Rather, adults should be afforded opportunities to explore and test many alternatives and views. Maslow (1976), in discussing the development of the Creative Ego, conveys the need for individuals to move beyond the bounded rationality that often directs thinking - to break out of more established patterns of thought and view things in a different way. Development of the Creative Ego takes courage and requires that one look beyond the "adequate". Its development is characterized by individuality, uniqueness and personal identity. Maslow (1976) suggests that the individual who possesses a creative ego will be:

1. Spontaneous, innocent, free from stereotypes and clichés
2. Unfrightened by the unknown -- courageous in pursuit of an idea
3. Tentative
4. Integrated -- exhibiting wholeness
5. Self accepting
6. Unfearful of others and of the inner self
7. Unwilling to accept for the sake of acceptance
8. Concerned with individuality, uniqueness and identity

These qualities must be fostered and encouraged in the educational setting. Consistent with the belief of Humanistic educators, "education should be a **drawing forth** of human potential rather that a **handing down** of preselected facts and skills" (Miller, 1990, p. 2). Empirical studies of creativity suggest that intrinsic motivation supports creative development while extrinsic motivation often impedes its development. Particularly detrimental to the drawing forth of the creative ego are such external motivators as: evaluation, surveillance, reward, competition, and restricted choice (Amabile, 1990).

Of particular importance during this era is the adult's search for the personal Dream which is a visualization of Self in the World. It is the personal Dream that serves as the impetus for visioning, essential to leadership. "Just as the personal Dream is a visualization of self in the world, the school vision is a formulation of the school's values and practices" (Levine, 1989, p. 72) orchestrated through leadership.

The personal Dream is a product of self understanding. Through self understanding "human beings generate a network of expectations, behaviors, perceptions of others, and interpretations of events" (Shoemaker, 1987, p. 357). Kouzes and Posner (1987) draw a direct parallel between self-understanding and leadership. Self understanding fosters a personal faith in one's capabilities, values and convictions. Leadership becomes, then, an artistic process with the leader serving as the instrument of creation (Kouzes and Posner, 1987). The personal Dream, or view of Self in the World (Levine, 1989), forms the basis for the vision, or sense of purpose, conveyed through leadership. "What the leader stands for envelops and directs what he does and ultimately encourages in others " (Norris, 1992, p. 107).

Self understanding is wrought in a social context. It is through others' perceptions that individuals develop self perception. Andrew (1978) outlines this process in a self-confirmation model consisting of the following steps:

1. Self-concept is formulated from needs and feelings
2. Needs and feelings influence personal actions

3. Self is recognized and projected in relation to others
4. Self is perceived by others (self affirmation or inconsistency results)
5. Information if refiltered by self
6. Self adjusts: (i.e. consistent information is assimilated; inconsistent information is distorted or reduced by the self-concept).
7. Information is reinterpreted by self

As cohort members have opportunities to interact and become interdependent groups, that cohesiveness promotes an element of trust. Surrounded by a network of support and mutual understanding, the individual, within the cohort, increases self esteem and experiences lowered levels of anxiety. Encased in a supportive environment, the individual is free to explore his/her own potentialities, risk self-revelation, and experiment with novel ideas.

Cohesive groups promote self revelation and the sharing of thoughts and emotions. Certainly, this effect is consistent with adult learning theory: "Activities focused on self awareness and self discovery can reinforce the continuing search for identity, throughout adulthood, interactive and reflective experiences will complement the adult's focus on intimacy, generativity, and integrity" (Levine, 1989, p. 65).

Empirical research on cohorts in university settings has shown that students in cohorts do report receiving psychological support from group members, feeling a reduced sense of loneliness, and developing strong affiliations (Hill, 1992; Kasten, 1992). In a study comparing cohort and non-cohort instructional models in several university settings, Herbert and Reynolds (n.d.) investigated how the cohort structure influences in -class interaction, group cohesion and instructional delivery patterns. In relation to cohesiveness, they asked students in cohort and non-cohort structures about (a) the degree of confidence and trust they had in one another, (b) how often they interacted with their peers outside of class time, and (c) how much time they studied with other students. In addition, professors teaching in cohort and non-cohort formats, were queried about students' social and task cohesion. Their results indicate that significantly greater

cohesiveness is demonstrated by students enrolled in a cohort format versus those in a non-cohort arrangement. Similarly, professors perceive more task and social cohesiveness among cohort students, noting that cohort students are more likely to form study groups and to provide support for each other.

Growth in Understanding. In cohesive groups, where learning is problem based and student centered, academic learning, too, is greatly enhanced (Knowles, 1970). In these activities, students become active learners, reacting and interacting with each other. Opportunities are provided for analysis and synthesis of facts, data and concepts. Knowledge it not received from external sources, but originates and evolves in the participant as he interacts with, and interprets, environmental stimuli (Norton, 1990, p.20). The self reflects on things as they are and visualizes what they should be. There is an ethical response reflecting personal beliefs and values.

Determining the ethical and moral tone of leadership requires that leaders step back and examine what Gardner calls the "outer husk of things" (Gardner, p. 17). Leaders must take a problem finding rather that problem solving stance (Norris and Achilles, 1988). Preparation for leadership, therefore, must be emersed in the problems of practice and provide students with the skills necessary to facilitate problem finding.

Returning again to the literature of adult learning theory, we are reminded that the adult learner learns best when relevance to self is a part of the learning process (Knowles, 1970). Students in cohorts centered around the problems of practice are in a unique position to become proactive problem finders rather then simply reactors to the problems presented by district administration and state agencies. In a field based context, where opportunities are provided for reflection, students are encouraged to question the relevance of current practice and to exercise initiative in the improvement of the educational system. As they gain greater self knowledge, and practice their own visioning, they perfect their ability to conceptualize new pathways for the improvement of education. It is through such opportunities that positions are taken and philosophies are born.

Leadership. Bass (1985) maintains that the first concern of the transformational leader is to conceptualize and communicate a philosophy which calls forth the moral and ethical qualities of leadership. Such leadership is artistry, for it encompasses an awareness of, and faith in, ones personal qualities, as well as, clarification of one's basic beliefs and values (Kouzes and Posner, 1990). These values and beliefs serve as beacons for conceptualizing organizational visions and infusing a sense of purpose.

Not only are transformational leaders reflective, questioning and risk taking themselves, but they, likewise, instill that attitude among those they lead. As Macmillan (1989) states, "Transformational leaders must have the ability to foster an atmosphere of creativity and initiative within a traditional bureaucracy and to sustain high energy levels for long periods-even when results are slow" (p.33). Rather than exhibiting personal control, these leaders, through their own persuasive ability, empower others to act.

The skill of empowerment grows out of "their deep respect for the aspirations of others...they are involved and in touch with those they lead...They care deeply about others; (they) often refer to those with whom they work as family" (Bass, 1985). Through interaction with others, cohesiveness is enhanced. Cohesiveness, however, is not an end in itself. It becomes, rather, the instrument for fostering cooperation. Cooperation is that element expressed by Barnard (1968) as the creative process. The leader serves as a catalyst for that cooperation. As Barnard states, "Leadership is the power of individuals to inspire cooperative personal decision by creating faith: faith in common understanding, faith in the probability of success, faith in the ultimate satisfaction of personal motives...faith in the superiority of common purpose as a personal aim of those who partake in it " (Barnard, p. 259).

Through the cohort experience, cooperation becomes a way of life-an avenue for the fulfillment of purpose. Interaction, purpose, and individual development all are prerequisites for the final characteristic of a true group, the development of the group itself-a celebration of interdependence.

Fully functioning cohorts are, in fact, communities, truly "repositories of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed cement for uniting people in a common cause...and provide{ing} norms that guide behavior and give meaning to the word community" (Sergiovanni, 1992 p. 41).

III. Preparation and Transfer

It is possible that more traditional preparation programs, encased in a rational behavioral approach, have, in the past, stifled the very qualities of reflective, divergent thinking they now wish to promote. In contrast, a leadership preparation program for adults should strive to promote self-renewing individuals (Gardner, 1963) who" pursue meaning in their existence...{and}...seek to understand how the objective world relates to them and their behavior" (Norris and Tangeman, (1994 p. 369).

In viewing the contrasting approaches to professional development, Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) suggest that the traditional model of preparation, whose purpose is knowledge acquisition, assumes that change will occur through standardized knowledge. On the other hand, the reflective practice model, whose purpose is behavior change, assumes that genuine change will occur only through self-awareness.

The learning process in the traditional model is didactic, individual and passive. Instructor is expert; whereas, the learner is subordinate. In cohort models, where the facilitator still plays the role of "sage on the stage", the traditional model may still exist, even though the structure for reform is present.

The reflective practice model, in contrast, is experiencial, collaborative, and action research centered. The instructor serves as facilitator, with the learner an active agent of the process (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993). Cohorts designed in this fashion promote true groups capable of building learning communities and transferring the knowledge of that process to future school settings.

In the words of (Prawat 1992, p. 13):

Many reformers believe that the creation of school learning communities is a necessary if not sufficient condition for the creation of classroom learning communities.

We would suggest that not only is this true, but that the creation of learning communities within universities is a necessary condition for the promotion of learning communities and leadership teams in schools. If all of this is true, then our efforts within a cohort structure should be concerned not only with the learning that occurs within the process but with reflective knowledge of the process itself ón the part of the learner. Kottkamp's definition of reflection seems appropriate in emphasizing this point:

{Reflection on action is} "a cycle of paying deliberate analytical attention to one's own actions in relation to intentions-as if from an external observer's perspective-for the purpose of expanding one's options and making decisions about improved ways of acting in the further, or in the midst of the action itself"(Kottkamp, 1993,p.3).

Not only should we consider "Reflection on Action", but we must be concerned, as well, with "Reflection for Action". The final section of this paper will focus on transfer of learning. How do we transport the learning process provided through cohort leadership laboratories to the field itself?

Transfer of Learning

The process of reflection is essential if the cohort experience is to become a vehicle for transporting transformational leadership. Reflection should foster transfer of learning. Transfer leads directly to assisting learners to apply new knowledge and skills to the workplace (Killion and Kaylor, 1991: Silberman, 1990).

Caffarella (1994) has identified six inter-related elements that affect an individual's ability to transfer learning from one setting to another. These factors are in the form of questions which might be considered in developing cohorts as learning laboratories:

.How do the participants' prevailing attitudes, previous learning experiences, skills, motivation, and time availability influence the transfer process?

.What specific changes are required of participants, professors, and others associated with the program if information is to be transferred to the workplaces?

.Does the program design and execution take into account the applicability of the materials and are specific transfer activities utilized in the program?

.Do the predominant values/attitudes, skills, and knowledge comprising the program content lend themselves to applicability and transfer?

.Does the current organizational context value continuous learning and is tangible support provided for transfer?

.Are the social, economic, and political conditions conducive for new ideas and skills being transferred to the workplace?

Closer examination of these factors suggests that some are easier to control than others. Generally, professors have more impact on the program content, design, and delivery and have less influence over community and societal forces (Caffarella, 1994). Concentrating on those aspects within the program's control, professors should ask themselves several questions:

1. When should the transfer strategies be introduced? Depending on the circumstances, transfer of learning strategies may be introduced before, during, and/or at the conclusion of the program

2. Who should be involved in the transfer? Besides the students themselves, the professor, supervisor's family, and friends may be required to participate in certain follow-up strategies.

3. What types of strategies are most appropriate and practical? These may include either within-classroom activities or strategies connecting to outside activities.

Many strategies appropriate for learning transfer have already become part of cohort programs. It is possible, however, that these are not being deliberately applied with the goal of transfer. Included in this list are such written activities as: self-assessments, inventories, reflective journals, individual action and learning plans, and personal platforms. A more active participation can be encouraged through role plays, simulations, and student support groups. These in-classroom activities can complement additional transfer strategies involving others outside of the classroom. Self-assessments

and individual learning plans, for instance, can help students identify ways to work with mentors, peer coaches, and supervisors (Norris, 1990).

When determining the design, delivery, and content of their courses and programs, professors can purposely identify how the features of transformational leadership can be simulated within the cohort experience and then determine how these features can be transferred to the work setting. Through the use of written assignments and inventories, simulations, field-based activities, and group processing activities, students can transfer what they are learning in the cohort to other settings.

Although transfer can be encouraged by professors, a note of caution is in order. A cohort of graduate students who are voluntarily preparing themselves from leadership roles is quite different from a collection of novice and veteran teachers and administrators who are part of a larger bureaucracy. Furthermore, there are some school systems and/or current school leaders who do not support and model transformational leadership. Therefore, while aspiring leaders may be studying and experiencing one set of leadership principles in the cohort, they many not find a fertile field to practice and refine those skills outside the security of the cohort. These impediments to transfer clearly suggest that closer partnerships be formed between university preparation programs and school systems if we are serious about developing and sustaining transformational leaders for today and tomorrow's schools.

The next section of this paper provides a look at four university cohorts that explored some of the concepts reflected in the previous four sections of this document. This study is designed only to explore, to glean perceptions, and to raise questions as we continue to ponder the cohort process.

IV. The Study

Methodology

The subjects for this exploratory study were 51 students from four separate university sites: California, Colorado, Texas, and Wyoming. Each university operated

one or more cohorts consisting of approximately 20 students each. Course work was designed in problem based fashion with professors serving as content facilitators rather than as direct instructors. During the summer experience, students kept daily journals, developed extensive leadership platforms, and took part in a comprehensive battery of personality and leadership assessments designed to enhance personal and group reflection.

As they participated in their classes students, in the four university cohort programs were asked to monitor how they were benefiting individually from the cohort experience, as well as, how their group was changing. Each student kept a personal journal and submitted a summary of important insights at the termination of the semester. Across the four university programs, 51 journal summaries were obtained. To assist in the analysis of these data, students' comments initially were coded in the following major categories: (a) individual growth, (b) group growth, (c) interaction, (d) purpose, (e) transferability, (f) advantages, and (g) disadvantages.

This initial coding scheme allowed for further examination of students' comments to determine the types of changes occurring in individual and group development and the factors that influenced this development. Using the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser, 1965), comments relating to either individual or group development were further divided into subcategories. Although this is an extremely rich data set dealing with the viability of cohorts in leadership preparation, for purposes of this paper we highlight only those comments that pertain to individual and group development. Interaction and purpose are assumed to be part of each.

Based on an examination of student journal summaries, the perceptions of students were analyzed to address the following questions:

Group Development

1. What were individual perceptions relative to the interaction and cohesiveness within the cohort?

2. What were the perceptions regarding the development of group purpose?

3. How did students view the cohort's overall development?

4. Was the cohort viewed by participants as a model for future collaborative leadership experiences? Did they perceive that the learning process would transfer to future settings

Individual Development

1. Did individual students feel supported in the cohort? Was the perceived support fostered by trust?

2. Did the cohort promote perceived individual growth? What growth areas were noted?

3. Were students challenged to further develop areas they perceived as weaknesses?

In presenting these data, the relative frequency of students' comments are reported in tables; qualitative data in the form of direct quotes from students' journals are included to illuminate these findings. Data is presented according to the sequence of questions posed. We begin with a consideration of perceived development of the cohort as a group and the implications of that development to the transfer of learning.

Presentation of Data

Group Development

1. What were individuals' perceptions relative to group interaction and cohesiveness within the cohort?

Through interaction, the group did perceive growth in cohesiveness. As noted in Table A, 49% (25 of 51) of the cohort members made direct mention to the bonding that took place.

Insert Table A here

Such comments as the following demonstrate their feelings of community:

> .The group became almost like an extension of each of because we all brought a part of ourselves and exposed our most inner thoughts to those in the group
>
> .I never expected to see the quality of fellowship and friendship-building activities as I witnessed this summer...will last a lifetime..I thought it was not possible after youth...is indeed possible
>
> .Interaction strengthened relationships, helped ease anxieties through sharing of experiences
>
> .Most important aspect...being able to build a "family tree" to fall back on later
>
> .How quickly we became a cohesive whole

.Some students noted specific positive outcomes or effects of this interaction, or cohesiveness, (see Table B) most notably the change in quality of relationships (27% or 14 of 51)

Insert Table B

---

and the willingness to take risks (12% or 6 of 51). Likewise, 18% (9 of 51) students acknowledged the importance of being tolerant and appreciating the different strengths and contributions of students in the cohort. Rather than being divisive, a diversity of viewpoints and ideas seemed to strengthen the group as noted in the following comments:

> .We've learned to appreciate diverse backgrounds and opinions and respect one another
>
> .{We} learned how to use individual's strengths to benefit the overall group
>
> .Almost all of us have developed feelings from tolerance to fondness of and for each other

.I have found that understanding the differences between other people and myself has helped me to see that people can still work together towards a common objective even though they have differences

This understanding was at times wrought through conflict and was for some, at least a painful experience:

.Most important aspect...developing skills necessary to work with people who have strong opinions that I don't agree with-that go against my personal values and beliefs. I still had to work with them to turn out effective presentations. It was difficult-exhausting.

2. What were the perceptions regarding the development of group purpose and the resulting interdependence?

Not only did the group members feel a spirit of connectedness, but 43% or 26 of 51 students (Table A) mentioned they perceived the group efforts to be purposeful and directed toward the accomplishment of goals. They expressed these feelings of collaboration in the following statements:

.Diversity with a common purpose is powerful. That is a belief statement of our cohort that stands out for me

.Cohort produced such synergy that is we could have bottled it, we could have taken the show on the road

.Presentations forced us to work together to accomplish a common a goal

Evidence of group cooperation and a sense of enjoyment prevailed as the groups made their presentations

.{We were} less concerned with our grades and more concerned with the importance of the tasks

.Group work enabled us to recognize and utilize each other's strengths, there by contributing to our growing sense of community

Certain factors are vitally important in building the sense of collaboration discussed in the earlier sections of this paper. Of those factors identified by students, the two most prominent (as displayed in Table C) are spending time planning group projects

and joint presentations (27% or 14 of 51) and engaging in school activities and substantive

---

Inset Table C

---

discussions outside of class (20% 10 of 51). Members of these cohorts do not want to "sit and get" information exclusively through lectures, but appreciate time for group activities where they can control their time to better meet their needs. As one student wrote:

> .Group projects were very beneficial and the application was much more meaningful than knowledge-level lectures

The group's collaboration is further exemplified by its perceived ability to resolve emerging problems (14% or 7 of 51-Table B). Rather than depending on the instructors to resolve problems or being passive themselves, cohort members sensed that their strength lay in being able to deal constructively with the problems and challenges which arose. These feelings are best reflected in these reactions:

> .{We} were trying to work out a schedule, it was obvious that we have moved into the "storming" stage... {We} are able to argue {and} get upset, but once it's over...we are upset at the actions, but not the people

> .Some in the group realized "pulling their load" is a responsibility and not a suggestion...{It} forced {the} group to figure out ways to work effectively

Finally, to suggest that the interactions of cohort members are always positive and growth-producing would be misleading. Students identify certain factors that inhibit the group's collaboration. On balance, there are fewer complaints than positive comments (see Table C); however, students mentioned that they do not appreciate when their classmates do not participate equally (8% or 4 of 51) or when certain members dominate discussions (6% or 3 of 51). They would prefer a more balanced contribution by all group members rather than some people rarely contributing ideas and others directing most of the discussion and activities. These frustrations are revealed in the following comments:

.Our group had a tough time in the last two days of IPR because of a few people speaking up after seven weeks of silence and a week left of class

.The dynamics of our group have been very interesting to observe...{I} still feel that we need to identify some ways to reach out to the quieter members of our group

3. How did students view the cohort's overall development?

For the most part, the students appreciated the opportunity to be involved in a process they did find productive and they perceived growth in the total group (31% or 16 of 51- Table A) as a result of the experience. The following examples are noted:

.The growth of the cohort seemed to be slow as I was experiencing it, but...I am surprised at how far we have come

.Cohort has..grown closer...feel more comfortable with each other...learned each other's strengths and weaknesses

.Cohort has developed into a culture. We all care about each other as if we are all family

.Key strengths...close relationships that developed between most of us

.Our cohort professor...let us create, test and search on our own. That's the toughest part

.As an entire group, development was very apparent

.Our most important growth-the development of a willingness to listen to and a tolerance for differing opinions

Even though there was much positive feeling among cohort members relative to group collaboration, all students did not perceive the group experience as a rewarding one and some had difficulty learning to work as a team. This is demonstrated in the following comments:

.I learned that I don't' like conflict. That isn't good for someone trying to get into administration. Maybe I need to rethink this whole program.

.I don't know if I want this level of intensity for every course

.People who have never taught, no education background, or lack basic education concepts are at an extreme disadvantage and limit group progress

.I miss the objective evaluations and information conveyed in lectures

.I didn't see the group grow very much-remained rather stagnant by doing same thing over and over

.The program was too flexible and not consistent

.Disjointed progression of our knowledge

.We all probably felt that we had been in one group too many by the end

4. Was the cohort viewed by participants as a model for future collaborative leadership experiences: Did they perceive that the learning process would transfer to future setting?

From their own reflection on the cohort process, students, perceived not only a connection between their learning experience and the building of community within school settings, but indicated a commitment to the transfer of that learning (53% or 27 of 51- Table A) to their future work roles.

.I will have a better experience at school this year and I think that others will benefit from the opportunities and ideas that have made better sense to me because of this experience

.The administrative team that I work with...are more like a collective group of administrators. I think of what two can accomplish once we achieve a bond such as we have with those around us this summer

.Teamwork is essential-especially considering the direction we're going in administration!...supportive and wonderful group of students and co-classmates that have formed a network system

.{I} think we have learned a lot about group dynamics and group process which when you get into the field, you have to work in these same situations

.In contemporary education, teamwork and cooperative groups are big components and if that's what 's supposed to be going on in schools and districts, then the universities must also support and model that type of system

.Exposure to a "real life" experience of school administration is the classroom

.Can we maintain the energy we have in class and transfer that to the workplace?

Individual Development

1. Did the individual student feel supported in the cohort? Was the perceived support fostered by trust?

As the groups became cohesive, an element of trust resulted. The cohort members reflected a strong indication of perceived personal support within this climate. Students mentioned personal support as a major outgrowth of the cohort

---

Insert Table D here

---

experience (37% or 19 of 51- Table D). They expressed their feelings in comments such as the following:

> .The environment in the class allowed me to feel secure enough to venture out and trust. This was a big step for me...
>
> .Interaction {made me feel} connected-not isolated-felt validated-not afraid to ask a question or to give an answer
>
> .Allowed me to accept the fact that although I am different, its OK..
>
> .We have all risked things with each other and we all feel good about it. We are friends now, and I expect that friendship to strength
>
> .The course forced me to trust my cohorts to pull together to see the tasks through
>
> .An interdependence has developed within the group and we've sought out one another to find solutions

Certainly, trust did result and its product was the sharing of individual strengths, a bonding, and a sense of community. This impact is best exemplified in the following quotes:

> .There was tremendous growth in the trust level of the group that allows individuals the opportunity to question and experiment in a caring environment
>
> .The group became almost like an extension of each of us because we all brought a part of ourselves and exposed our most inner thoughts to those in the group

.Group work enabled us to recognize and utilize each others' strengths, thereby contributing to our growing sense of community.

2. Did the cohort promote individual growth and development? What growth areas were noted?

Self Awareness. When groups are cohesive, self awareness and the sharing of thoughts and emotions are more likely to occur. A large number of students (60% or 29 of 51-Table D) mentioned this as a particularly significant part of their cohort experience:

.The atmosphere of the class helped to bring on a real sense of understanding

.Growth I have experienced has been profound...I knew what I could do, but I really didn't know who I was.. I learned to define my internal core...Understanding who I am keeps me out of the box in which I allowed too many people to place me. I now live on a mountain of my own making...my perch has become a vantage point from which I can celebrate being alive

.Powerful transformation has taken place in my life

.I truly have made many self-discoveries...many things that I suspected about myself and my leadership style have been reaffirmed

.I have learned a lot about my leadership potential, gained confidence in my abilities

Beliefs and personal values. Of particular importance in the development of leadership is the clarification of personal beliefs. Many students in these cohorts believe that the experience contributed to that personal understanding (43%, or 23 o f 51- Table D). Comments such as the following demonstrate their feelings:

.I gained such strength in my convictions

.The concepts of integrity means more now than it did four weeks ago

.I have discovered through writing my own personal beliefs, vision and mission that I am a good person

.I found out that my "cause" was a worthwhile effort

.It allowed people to look at the other side of issues. I know this happened to me

.Using the small group approach we are able to question each other and dig a little deeper into the reasons for our actions and beliefs

.Listening to the class and group discussions centering on others' problems made me realize that I was not alone. Reviewing my educational platform renewed my fire and my convictions

Appreciation of others. Self understanding grew into an understanding and appreciation of others. A number of students (49% or 25 of 51-Table D) mentioned this as a definite personal growth experience. They acknowledge their feelings in the following comments:

.I enjoyed getting to know people who have the same hopes and dreams I have

.I wanted to take everyone aside for a private chat

.Most important aspect has been appreciating the different personalities. I have become more flexible

.Developed my tolerance for different styles

.The cohort has shown me that each member of your faculty team would be nice but flat without the collective knowledge of the other

.The other thing that brought me in was that I started to care about these people

Academic Content. Within the cohort setting, the knowledge base was greatly enhanced. Students mentioned enhanced education as an important area of individual development (49% or 25 of 51- Table A). Learning took on new meaning as noted in the follow comments:

.I am relearning how to learn with meaning

.I've learned to integrate a diverse group of ideas and opinions and learned how to better utilize my facilitating skills to bring about quality products

.It has given us a theoretical framework which we were forced to apply to reality right way

.Much of what I intuitively know was made more clear to me by being so well thought out and expressed. It really helped me to clarify and to solidify some of my perceptions

.Forced self directed learning

.I'm back into research and I have found a topic I think I may stay with throughout my program

.I'll miss the dialogues, the smiles and desire within us to make the world a better place for everyone. We are all richer from this experience

3. Were students challenged to further develop areas they perceived as weaknesses?

Students felt that the cohort experience provided a challenge to continue to develop themselves (29% or 15 of 51-Table D). These feelings of challenge are expressed in some of the following quotes:

.I feel challenged by this and ...determined that this degree will enrich my growth and life

.My ability to care about and interact with others is a good place for me to build upon in my quest to grow

.I have been forced to learn about those things toward which I am not naturally inclined, and I have developed an understanding of their importance and the necessity of dealing with them

Students, not only recognized the importance of the group process as a transferable skill to future school settings (as was mentioned in the section on Group Development), but were challenged to apply particular components to their own work settings. They indicate:

.I am more prepared to take on the role of educational leader or at least more confident

.I am amazed how much improved it (cohort experience compared to traditional program) is. I am committed to do more cooperative learning with my own students

.I will have a better experience at school this year and I think that others will benefit from the opportunities and ideas that have made better sense to me because of this experience

The remaining section of this paper will discuss these findings and present implications for practice.

Discussion of Findings

Group Development. The perceptions of students in these cohorts strengthen previous empirical research and conceptual literature on group formation and development. These findings provide a strong indication that the four groups explored were indeed "real" rather than mere collections of individuals possessing "entitativity." The qualities of interaction/cohesiveness and purpose/collaboration did seem to result in the groups' interdependence. Not only are the students in these cohorts observant of the positive effects garnered by their cohort involvement, but they also recognize certain critical features which they believe facilitate, as well as detract from, the group's "realness."

Perhaps the most striking finding is the degree of bonding experienced within these cohorts, confirming what others report about cohorts in university preparation programs (Herbert and Reynolds, n.d.; Hill, 1992; Kasten, 1992). The mutual support and solidarity found in cohort groups (Johnson & Johnson, 1987) definitely permeate the feelings expressed by these cohort students. In fact, the variety of terms used to capture this sense of cohesion is striking. Repeatedly, throughout the journal summaries, words such as "close relationships," "family tree," "bonding," fellowship," acceptance," "inclusion," "community," and "empowerment" are found. One is left with the impression that these students genuinely like one another and value the time spent in their cohort learning experience.

From the cohort learning experience, we gain some insight into students' understanding of the factors that promoted and hindered cohesiveness. They suggest that they were inspired to bond together by such factors as "time availability, "modeling," "varied activities," "learning to care," "out of class activities," and a chance to talk about what we were experiencing." One student, in the following statement, summed up the essence of what happened as the cohort ventured into the realm of "realness:"

As we spoke to each other in discussions and self-disclosed, an interesting event occurred. It happened without our direct knowledge and came quietly into each of our

lives. I believe that immediate trust, true concern for each other, and a bonding of sorts took place naturally and with ease.

Building on this theme of cohesiveness, our data reflect the importance of these interactions and resulting interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Larson and LaFasto, 1989). This sense of interdependence is acknowledged by students in two important ways. First, the presence of certain activities and structures which facilitate interaction are noteworthy. For example, the opportunities afforded by instructors for students to engage in group projects and in-depth discussion in and outside the classroom are vitally important. By minimizing lectures and teacher-directed activities, cohort members are provided with multiple opportunities for ongoing, face-to-face interactions in smaller groups. As such, they obtain a greater sense of individual and collective accountability while developing trust and confidence in the diverse talents of the different group members (Herbert and Reynolds, n.d.; Larson an dLaFasto, 1989). In addition, the size of these groups affects interaction (Johnson and Johnson, 1987). As some students noted, they were inhibited by larger groups, therefore, constraining their willingness to participate.

Second, the scarcity, or excess, of certain behaviors can impede interdependence. On the one hand, passive group members who are reluctant to contribute during the discussions are viewed as shirking their responsibility toward completing the group task. Similarly, if the group composition changes (e.g., when a vital member is not present or leaves the group), then the other members may have to take on new roles which may be somewhat uncomfortable. On the other hand, group members who tend to dominate and/or control the group discussions prevent others from contributing, leading to a lack of collective involvement and frustration in completing the task. Therefore, balanced interaction is deemed an important factor in creating the interdependence required for successfully accomplishing the group's goals.

In this study, group development was viewed primarily as a context, or climate, for nurturing individual growth. We can conclude that, based on the perceptions of these group members, the cohorts possessed those qualities deemed essential for "realness" and

therefore individual development. Causation, degree of development, and more quanitative aspects related to these groups was not the domain of this study. It is important to note, however, that this study does suggest that, even in "real" groups, where the majority have bonded and feel support, there are those who still remain on the "fringes," separated from the benefits of the group and offering little to the groups' purpose.

This study suggests that there are many specific areas related to group development that need further investigation. These areas would certainly include the role of the group facilitator and the whole area of group processing. The impact of these factors on group development was beyond the realm of this particular study. In the discussion section, we present findings relative to the development of the individual as a member of the group.

Individual Development. Individuals within these cohorts, express the belief that significant personal growth took place as a result of their cohort experiences. The individuals felt **supported.** Through participation in the cohort experience. They indicate that the interaction made them feel "connected - not isolated." They "sought out one another to find solutions" and "pulled together to see the task through." In addition, they felt emotional **security**. The group became a nurturing climate exuding an atmosphere of trust which allowed the individual to feel "validated," "secure" and "connected, "and to experience "risk-taking, and a questioning" stance.

Wrapped in this cohort climate, the individual responded to the warmth and concern he/she felt was extended. In turn, the individual reached out to others. **Friendship** bonds were formed. The individual, through this process, acknowledged personal feelings of "tolerance", "acceptance" and "care" for others. The nurturing environment in these four cohorts seems to have allowed individuals the opportunity to explore and to work toward the resolution of the isolation/intimacy conflict characteristic of Young Adulthood (Erikson, 1968).

Within a nurturing environment, attention moved from an inward focus on self to an outward focus that included others. These future leaders experienced the diversity and complexity of the group and became cognizant of others' unique gifts. Ultimately, they developed their own capacity to support, promote and inspire others in their development. If this is true, then the cohort experience should have provided the impetus for these individuals to care more deeply for others - not only in the cohort but in their future work roles as well. The qualities of a transformational leader were exercised as the future leader's part in the group's success becomes more important. This preparation in action provided cohort members with skills and attitudes which should transfer as they facilitate the empowerment of future individuals and organizations. Through collegial cohort experiences, future leaders learned to trust each other in the pursuit of purposeful goals. "In cooperation, people realize that they are successful when others succeed and are oriented toward aiding each other to perform effectively" (Tjosvold, 1986, p. 25). Students in these collegial cohorts seem to have experienced this.

Kouzes and Posner (1987, p. 148) suggest, that "Trust is at the heart of fostering collaboration. Leaders who build trusting relationships within their team feel comfortable with the group. They are willing to consider alternative viewpoints and to utilize other people's expertise and abilities." Such cooperation is exercised to the degree that cohort members are provided opportunities to work together in the resolution of problems and are encouraged to define their own purposes and goals. It is through such experiences that future leaders develop the facility for problem finding as well as problem solving. In a climate of cohort empowerment, undergirded by collegiality, future leaders learn the important skills and lessons necessary for promoting cooperation in the organizations they will one day lead.

Students perceive that their **knowledge** and understanding has been greatly enhanced through the cohort experience afforded in these university settings. A large percentage of students mentioned this as a significant factor in their personal development. They talk of "learning with meaning," "relevance," "self-direction" and

"application of theory to reality" as important characteristics of their learning experience. They do not view their learning as complete, however, but mention the words "challenged", "determined", "building upon" and "committed" as they discuss their zeal to continue this growth.

Along with general knowledge and skills, clarification of values and personal beliefs was a major part of the learning experience as perceived by these students. They have "confirmed beliefs," "strengthened convictions," "explored the other side of issues" and "renewed (their) fire and convictions". From this discourse, it is clear that many of these students have considered issues and ideas through the lens of personal values and beliefs and that they have become comfortable in providing voice to their visions.

For these students, the pathway to the **personal Dream** seems to have been made more clear. They talk of "powerful transformations," "a sense of understanding," "growth" and "enhanced confidence" in their own abilities. Through self awareness they appear to have validated their own personal pathways to leadership and perfected their artistic skill as future leaders (Kouzes and Posner, 1987).

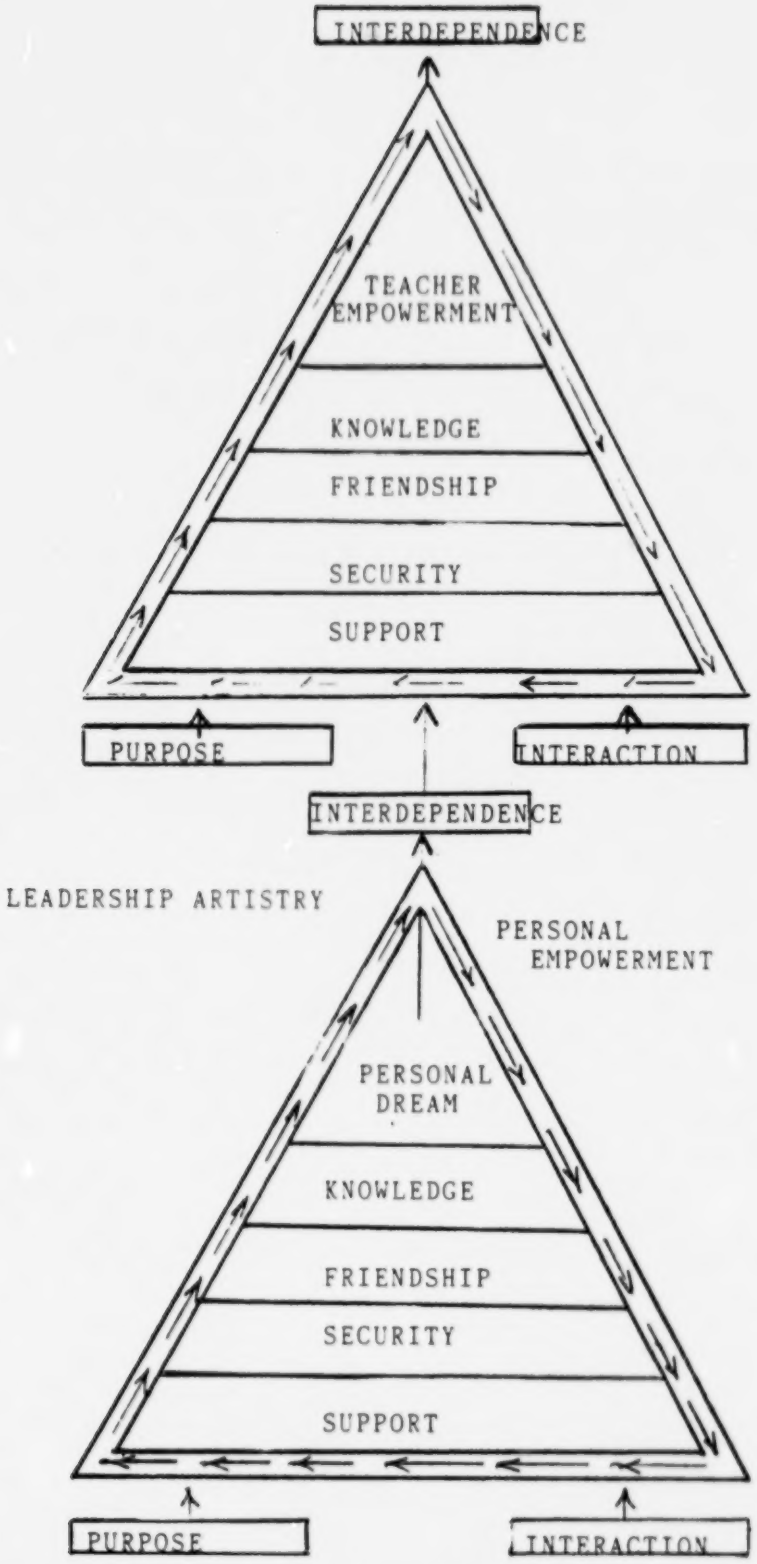
Individual and Group Development: A Cohort Model

Returning again to the earlier concepts of group development presented in this paper (i.e. a collection of individuals impacting the group- a group impacting each individual member), we present the following model shown in figure 1.

The larger triangle in this model represents the cohort as a total group. The group is built on three major cornerstones, each impacting and strengthening the other. Those cornerstones are: **interaction** (which results in cohesiveness among group members), **purpose** (which promotes collaboration), and **interdependence** (which represents the hallmark of a group's realness). The model is cyclic in the sense that each point in the group's progressive development continues to gain reinforcement from the step that precedes it.

Interaction is the beginning stage that moves a group beyond "entitativity" "to realness" (as mentioned earlier in this paper). Purpose grows out of the group's

FIGURE 1
TRANSFOMATIONAL
LEADERSHIP



interaction and resulting cohesiveness. To the degree that interaction/cohesiveness strengthens purpose, or collaboration, the group develops an interdependence which promotes, not only the success of the group, but fosters the development of the individual as well.

As demonstrated by the model's inner triangle, the individual is encased within the supportive climate of the group itself. As the group is strengthened, the individual, too, experiences growth. That growth is hierarchical in the sense that each step toward development is a growth area, or need, which group membership promotes for the individual. Each succeeding area of development in the triangle is dependent upon fulfillment of the preceding development area, or need. As these needs, or development areas are fulfilled, the individual moves in an upward pathway toward realization of the personal Dream, or View of Self in the World (Levinson, 1986). It is important to note that even though these steps toward development are hierarchical in their progression, the needs felt at each step are never satiated but continue to permeate the individual's life and development. Each completed step is reinforcing to the one following it. The individual's total development is enhanced as the group itself is strengthened.

The final point is perhaps most significant of all. The further the individual progresses in the hierarchy-or is empowered-the more significantly the individual contributes to the development of the group. Empowered individuals empower groups. As groups are empowered, so are individuals. Cohort members have sensed this process through their own experiences and express it most succinctly:

> I feel that group growth is the total of the personal growth of each person in the group.
>
> and again...
>
> The group became almost like an extension of each of us because we all brought a part of ourselves.....

Conclusion

We take the position that a cohort structure does not in itself insure a cohort. A cohort is inticing in its design; its novelty signifies progress. It is possible however, that some educational leadership departments may have embraced the structure without full appreciation of its potential function. Perhaps it is time to return to the drawing board and examine more fully the components and theoretical frameworks undergirding the cohort structure. Perhaps it is time to explore the foundations on which cohorts rest , such as: group dynamics, adult learning theory, curriculum development, creativity and futures education, and, above all, the very process of leadership itself to develop a stronger theoretical framework to guide future action. By doing so, we will, with greater certainty, be assured that the structure we have erected will be used to its greatest advantage. To do less is to commit our structure to a predictable future. Let us be aware that an educational structure not fully utilized is not unlike any structure, or building, erected as "a sign of progress." It:

.Is for a time a novelty...a symbol of change

.Soon reaps little return or benefit, if not fully utilized

.Becomes a "hollow statement" of progress

.Tends to deteriorate

.Is ultimately condemned

.Disappears from use

We believe that few structures available to us in the preparation of future school leaders have greater potential then the cohort for fostering a new leadership paradigm. To view the structure merely as a method of course delivery, a vehicle for socialization, a convenient scheduling design, or as an upbeat, fashionable "in approach" is to do the cohort structure an injustice. To consider it thoughtfully as a structure for transporting a new leadership paradigm is to embrace its potential with optimism and to fully reap it rewards. The challenge is ours.

Table A
Perceived Group Development
in University Cohorts
N=51

Areas of Development	N	Percent
Interaction/Cohesiveness	25	49%
Purpose	21	43%
Overall Progress	16	31%
Transfer to Work Life	27	53%

Table B
Perceived Growth Areas
Resulting from Cohesiveness
N=51

Areas of Growth	N	Percent
Overall progress of the group	16	31%
Quality of relationships	14	27%
Development of trust/risk taking	6	12%
Strength of individual differences	9	18%

Table C
Factors Perceived to Influence
Group Collaboration/Interdependence
N=51

Positive Factors	**N**	**Percent**
Group projects/presentations	14	27%
Outside class activities/discussions	10	20%
Resolution of Problems	7	14%
Negative Factors		
Lack of participation/responsibility	4	8%
Dominant group members	3	6%
Change in group membership	3	6%
Size of group	2	4%

Table D
Perceived Areas of Individual
Development in University Cohorts
N=51

	N	Percent
Self Affirmation	30	60%
Understanding of Others	25	49%
Enhanced Education	25	49%
Beliefs/Values	23	43%
Personal Support	19	37%
Challenge	15	29%

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